



Press Release

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Transport Canada undermines safety say aviation inspectors

Ottawa – A wide majority (74%) of safety inspectors think a major aviation accident or incident is likely to occur in Canada in the near future and 61% believe a new approach to regulating the industry will actually increase this likelihood.

These are among the findings that emerge from a Pollara survey of licence pilots employed by Transport Canada as aviation inspectors released this morning in Ottawa.

“Canada’s aviation inspectors have serious safety concerns. Funding cuts are undermining Transport Canada’s capacity to ensure safety. Meanwhile, legislation to amend the *Aeronautics Act*, *Bill C-6*, will make this bad situation worse,” said Greg Holbrook, National Chair of the Canadian Federal Pilots Association (CFPA) which represents the inspectors.

Bill C-6, currently under study by the Commons Transport Committee, paves the way for weak Safety Management Systems (SMS) that invite increased risk for air passengers.

The Bill allows airlines to set their own risk levels and monitor their own safety standards and regulatory compliance. Bill C-6 also give airlines immunity from enforcement for self-reporting of safety violations – a “get out of jail free” card.

At the same time, program cuts at Transport Canada have sidelined inspectors whose detailed audits and on-site monitoring of airline operations will mostly be replaced by assessments of the performance of airlines’ safety systems.

Pollara found that CFPA aviation inspectors panned this new approach.

The Pollara study found that 85% of those surveyed are worried about airlines and airports regulating themselves through SMS when it comes to safety, and 43% are very worried.

The poll also found that 80% believe SMS will prevent them from addressing and correcting safety problems before they happen, a sobering insight given the consequences.

“Faced with shrinking budgets and an aviation inspectorate that will shrink by half in the next few years, Bill C-6 and SMS seek to off load Transport Canada’s safety responsibility to the airlines. This is about affordable, not acceptable safety levels,” said Holbrook.

Other survey findings include:

- 67% believe Transport Canada’s SMS will result in a higher level of risk in the aviation system because industry cost pressures will lead to safety corners being cut
- 77% believe that public confidence in the aviation system would decline with awareness of SMS

Pollara conducted the online survey of CFPA aviation inspectors from January 26 to February 2, 2007. The survey was completed by more than 65% of CFPA members, an exceptionally high response rate.

The CFPA will be calling for changes to strengthen Bill C-6 in an appearance this afternoon before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

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The complete report from Pollara is available at <http://www.cfpa-apfc.ca/eng/media.html>